

TRIEGLAFF

Rudolf von Thadden

Trieglaff

*Balancing Church and Politics in a Pomeranian World,
1807–1948*



Translated by
Stephen Barlau



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By Rudolf von Thadden

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All figures are courtesy of the von Thadden family's private archives. Thanks to Wallstein Verlag publishers for use of their files in production of this edition.

Preface to the English Edition

The final impetus to writing this book was lent by a 100-year-old American from Wisconsin whose ancestors emigrated from Trieglaff 150 years ago. During my visit with her in a nursing home in West Bend, she presented me with a small chest containing letters, stretching over half a century, from her relatives in Pomerania. She handed me the box with the words, "You'll still be able to read the old German handwriting. Nobody here can anymore."

Already before that, Polish friends from today's Trzygłów had requested of me that I should write up something about the history of this Pomeranian place. After the war, they came to the area lacking acquaintance with the former German world and were for that reason interested in learning more about the people who had lived there before. It did not seem adequate just to pay attention to some memorial stones as testimony to a German past.

Lastly, my German relatives and friends put pressure on me following my retirement as emeritus professor of history at Göttingen to get at the partially rescued archives of the family and to evaluate the testimony they offered to the Trieglaff of former times. Given the terrific losses that also—and not least—private archives from the earlier eastern regions suffered at the end of World War II, it devolved upon me as historian to exploit the remnants still at hand.

This book deals with the history, over five generations, of the Pomeranian village of Trieglaff in what is now western Poland. It is about the people that lived and toiled in this village in good times and bad. Architecturally, the place was dominated by the mansion of the von Thadden family, which is at the center of the following analysis of Trieglaff's society, economy, politics, and culture. While the book is largely based on the family archive with its many documents, it also relies on a variety of other testimonies, including a set given to me by several families in Wisconsin, in the United States, whose forebears had emigrated from Trieglaff some 150 years ago. Their correspondence with those who stayed behind in Pomerania suggests an intriguing transatlantic link between Trieglaff and the Midwestern United States.

All this has enabled me to write a book that examines the lives of individuals, the socioeconomic and cultural structures, and the dynamic changes in the village throughout some 150 years of German and European history. The Thaddens lived in Trieglaff from the Napoleonic age to 1945. They were involved in Prussian politics during the Bismarckian period. Later in the twentieth century, several of its members joined the resistance against the Nazis and Hitler's church policies. Reinold von Thadden played a prominent role in the anti-Nazi Protestant "Confessing Church," and his sister Elisabeth was arrested by the Gestapo for her activities and executed in September 1944 at Plötzensee prison in the suburbs of Berlin.

The changes in the social and economic structures analyzed in this book primarily concern the gradual dissolution of the lingering feudalism that had been undermined in the wake of the French Revolution. But these changes also affected the Protestant churches of Prussia, shaking the traditional foundations of state and church and initiating a process of secularization that spread to the rural parts of the country.

Readers of this book will expect an explanation of these processes. Especially in the United States, it is not easy to understand why the so-called defeudalization created so many problems in German and European history. The peoples of the New World, having escaped life in feudal conditions under an ancien régime, did not have to grapple with the transformation of societies shaped by structures of domination, where social and economic stratification was defined by estates, a landed nobility, and an autocratic king.

Readers of this book will also be curious why discussions over the relationship between church and state played such an important role in Europe and in Prussia in particular. This relationship—a part of the Old World since the Middle Ages—had produced ties between the two institutions that time and again were threatened by an overly rigid alliance between "Throne and Altar." Thus it was hardly a matter of course that a place like Trieglaff and people like the von Thadden family would enter into conflict with the ruling "Landeskirche" and ultimately even break almost entirely away from it. This break would prove consequential for the Thaddens' later confrontations with the Nazi regime. Having already opposed an earlier, strongly state-dominated church, it was easier for them to join the resistance against Hitler's church policies in 1933 and to create Free Church structures under the Nazi dictatorship.

The book ends with two chapters on the period after World War II, during which Trieglaff was first subjugated by the Red Army and then incorporated into Poland. Events in those regions that had been allocated to Poland were frequently overlooked during the years of the Cold War between East and West. Many years passed before the two sides resumed

contact, whereupon even most of the Germans expelled from the territories east of the Oder-Neisse Line began to work for peaceful reconciliation. Trieglaff was to play an important role in this respect, too.

On one especially memorable occasion, descendants of Trieglaff natives who had emigrated from Pomerania to Wisconsin participated in a reunion that transcended a once impregnable border. It is highly gratifying that the translator of this volume, Stephen Barlau, hails from these U.S. families. He deserves special thanks for taking on this translation. I am also grateful to Georg and Wilma Iggers, who were driven from their Central European homes by the Nazis; they have involved themselves with sensitivity and great sympathy in the publication of this study. I also owe a debt of gratitude to Barbara Fox, née von Thadden, who built her own life and work in England. Following the writing of this book with the eyes of a loyal kinswoman, she offered most helpful advice.

This Preface concludes with two further words of thanks due to Berghahn Books for agreeing to publish *Trieglaff* in English and to the Thyssen Foundation for supporting the translation. And finally, I acknowledge that I would not have had the strength to write this book if I had not always had my wife Wiebke at my side and our children prodding me to complete the project.

Rudolf von Thadden
Göttingen, Easter 2013

Translator's Remarks

"I could be in the cemetery at Trieglaff," Rudolf von Thadden observed as he surveyed the cemetery at Zion Lutheran Church at Wayside, Wisconsin, on a visit in September 2008. German naming has regional and local qualities, and the names on the gravestones spoke Pomeranian to him.

Trieglaff in the U.S. Evidence, etched in granite. Add the vibrancy of a Pomeranian heritage that is still celebrated and the Lutheranism that is so prominent in the area, and Trieglaff can be said to be still with us—probably truer to its native stock than is contemporary Polish Trzygłów. The heritage lives on, here as in other places, of course amalgamated into contemporary culture. Rudolf von Thadden's *Trieglaff* in English translation will be welcomed by not only those who count themselves within this community, but also all to whom such a history as this, of a given time and place, appeals. It is intended for them.

For scholars, the book's value lies in documentation of a place and a period in history, approached from the vantage point of the von Thadden family. The family archives are exploited extensively for original material. Yet given the breadth of the family's involvement in both political and religious affairs, there is no lack of integration into history on the large scale. Footnotes and bibliography range far beyond the archival material. The work knows its place as contribution to the writing of social history. Researchers will welcome this translation of an "inside" view—of resistance to feudalism's decline and banishment, of Bismarck's formative background, of one influential individual's unflagging opposition to Nazism, and of inter-nation territorial transfer, among many other topics. May it serve them well.

Indeed, I hope all of its readers, whatever their motivation for taking it up, will find this edition of von Thadden's work to their satisfaction.

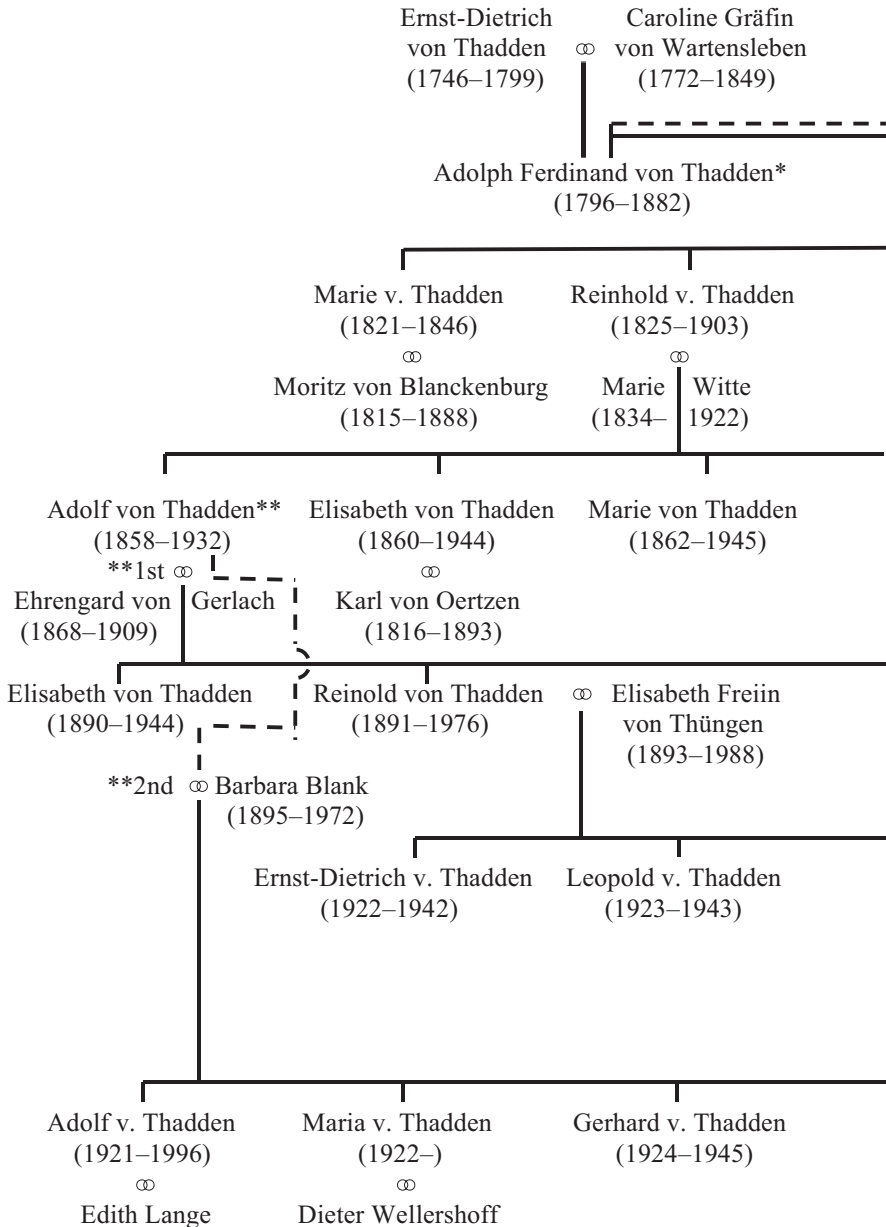
Wilma Iggers played a critical role in the translation, bringing her European and German background to bear at the cost of many hours of editing. I owe a great deal to the profuse corrections and improvements she made to the work. Royal Natzke read and commented on the entire manuscript, furnishing important guidance that proved highly beneficial. Markus Ciupke and Hajo Gevers of Wallstein Verlag, publisher of the

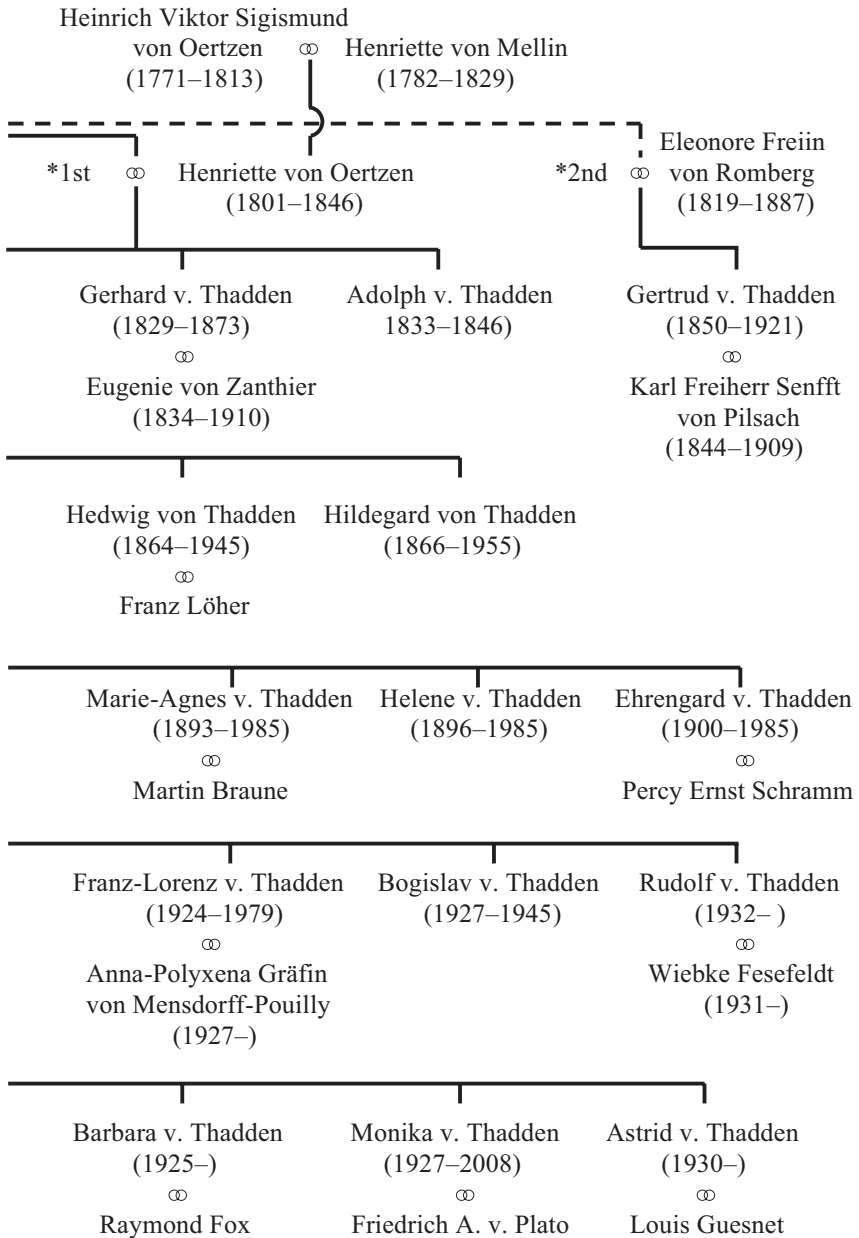
original German edition, provided unqualified support and assistance. For Berghahn Books, Jaime Taber carried out the essential service of putting my style and syntax in order, a monumental task. Thank you, Jaime. Others offered valuable criticism of a more general nature, especially at early stages of the undertaking—perhaps Jennifer Stewart should be mentioned. I am indebted to them. Faults and shortcomings are my own.

Sincere thanks go to Rudolf von Thadden for extending to me the opportunity to translate *Trieglaff* into English, and to Georg and Wilma Igers and Royal Natzke for their instrumental roles. It was an experience, a privilege, and a pleasure. My wife Anita (Natzke) has, as always, stood by most helpfully.

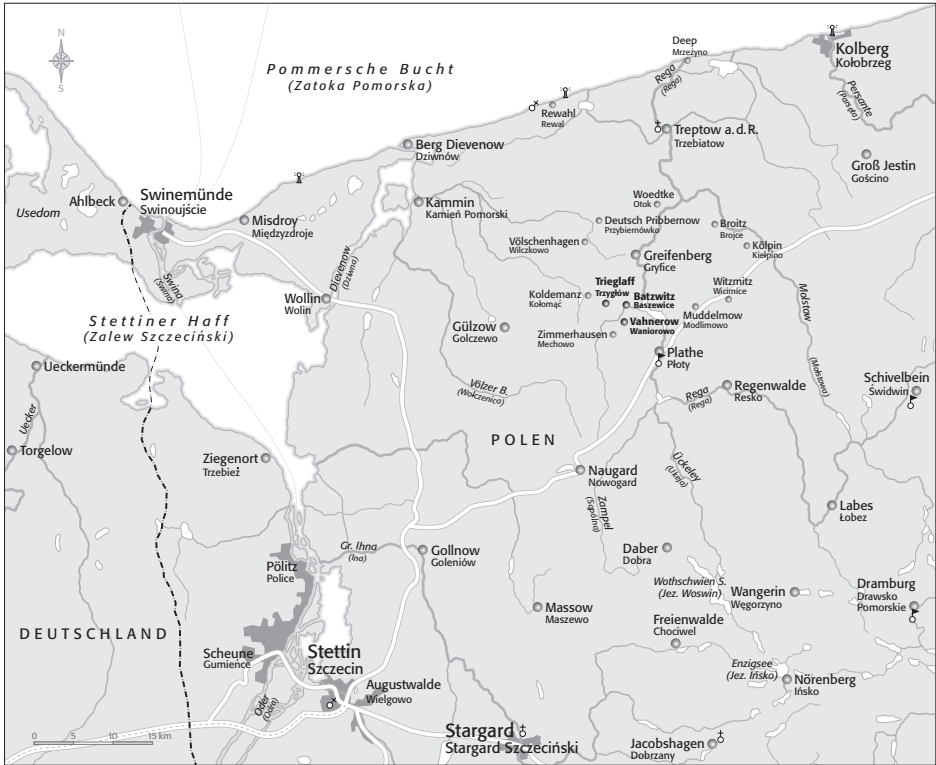
Stephen Barlau
Merrill, Wisconsin, April 2013

Genealogical Diagram of the von Thadden Family





Map of Pommern



Map of Trieglaff



Introduction



The history of Trieglaff presented here is laid out generation by generation. At its center is the von Thadden family. This arrangement aims to develop a historical continuity that will be unique to it without necessarily coinciding with the continuities commonly exhibited in historical writing. Generations acquire life and vitality through their connections with each other, and are characterized also by reciprocal influences upon and from the political and social worlds around them. Hence they neither exist exclusively as independent successive stages, nor are they ever strictly confined solely to their respective eras.¹

A history structured generationally does assign a special measure of significance to biographical context. This significance arises because issues of property and inheritance are in the balance, but it is owing also to people's intellectual and political orientations, which undergo development over the course of a lifetime rather than simply reflecting the governing political circumstances.

In any case, it is certain that memory plays a meaningful part in a history laid out by generations. Because generations gain legitimacy through respect for their interconnectedness and their cohesion, they cultivate their own culture of memories, a culture that at times can gain autonomy. Generations live with a historical memory that itself has the substance of a reality. We are required to come to terms with this reality.²

But what meaning does that have for Trieglaff? A generational history requires that the deepest components of the history are brought into the light and examined. This initially pertains to the family history of the titled landholders, the von Thaddens, who took up residence in Trieglaff at the time of the Napoleonic wars and there developed a unique tradition of piety. Then there is the history of the place itself, bound to a unique world and way of life. Its understanding makes an evaluation of historical social

and economic conditions essential. Lastly, there is the general history of the province of Pomerania, of Prussia, and of Germany, which left its imprint upon Trieglaff and framed conditions for pivotal developments. All these components are interwoven with each other.

The family history of the Thaddens is closely tied to trends in church history. These introduced a dynamic of their own, for in their wake religious and political developments proceeded under great tension, by no means embodying the harmony that characterizes the conventional image of the throne-and-altar alliance.³ The forces of resistance spawned in Trieglaff in the nineteenth century in opposition to the demands of the official state church would bear fruit in the twentieth century, in the battle against the ecclesiastical politics of Nazism.

Local history, for its part, is bound in the first place to geographical givens. How could it be otherwise? Trieglaff and its neighboring villages lay (and lie) apart from any major long-distance transportation routes or rail lines. It is only half as far to the Baltic Sea as to the Oder River. To compensate, it has two large lakes rich in fish, which, while certainly less entwined in legend than Fontane's setting of Stechlin, nevertheless lent and still lend to Trieglaff a charm of its own. What nourished legend rather were the primeval oaks in the churchyard. There, according to *Pomerania*, Bugenhagen's famous chronicle published in 1517, an image of the three-headed heathen idol Triglav was supposed to have been hidden. Its priests had saved it from the Christian missionaries of Bishop Otto of Bamberg and brought it to a widow in Trieglaff.⁴

Thus Trieglaff exemplifies how situation, though it has meaning for the everyday, is not the most prominent element. In contrast to neighboring Vahnerow, the village's social distinctiveness derived from a layout that had a section for farming people at one end and centered upon a traditional manorial estate at the other (Figure 2). The village accordingly featured not only the juxtaposition of an agrarian workforce alongside a feudal propertied gentry still associating itself with a waning knighthood-based social status, but also a triangular relationship among estate proprietors, workers, and farmers (*Bauern*). The last were for the most part scarcely emancipated from serfdom during the initial years, with consequences for the configuration of later conflicts.⁵

General political history unquestionably holds a significant place in the history of the development of Trieglaff and its neighboring villages. There have existed a pre-Prussian, a Prussian, and a German Trieglaff, and since 1945 also a Polish Trzygłów. The Trieglaff of the Thaddens (see Figure 1)—from 1820 to 1945—extends from the Prussian to the German period. The time stands out because the estate household had immediate and particularly intense experience of the conflict and accommodation

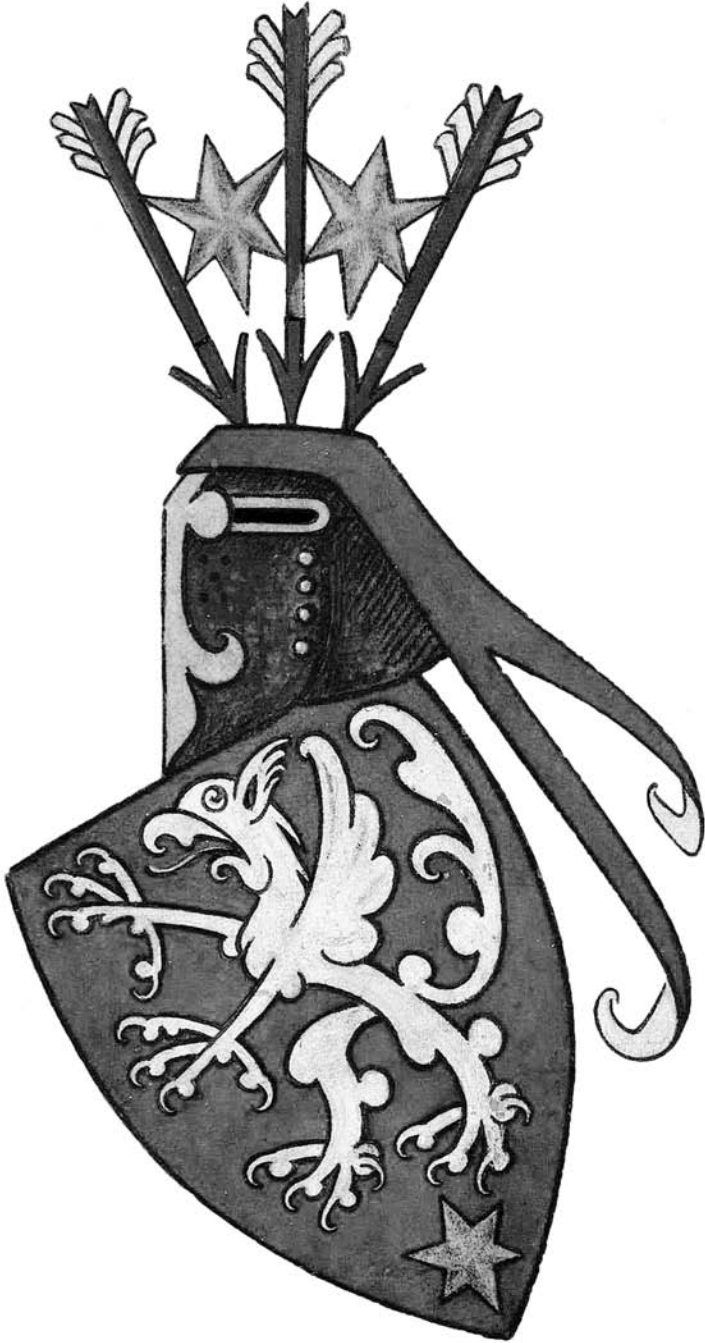


Figure 1. Coat of arms of the von Thadden family, Nesnachow branch

that attended relations between erstwhile Prussia and the new German Empire (das Deutsche Reich, 1871–1918). This developed out of the estate family's close, even intimate acquaintance with Otto von Bismarck.⁶

With respect to the history of society, the demise of feudalism runs like a red thread through Trieglaff's Thadden era. Politically, it began with the Stein-Hardenberg Reforms of 1807 and ended for all practical purposes when manorial estates were dissolved as autonomous civil jurisdictions in 1927. Under way in the generation prior to the 1848 Revolution, although relatively slowly and ponderously, it then accelerated during the unification of the empire even as conservative forces mounted forceful resistance to the breakup of feudal structures, especially at Trieglaff itself. The Pomeranian estates continued to be a vital part of an ancien régime—an old order—up to the end of the Weimar Republic in 1933.⁷

Noteworthy here, with respect to social history, is that the processes of defeudalization and acquisition of middle-class or burgher rights follow separate timelines.⁸ The Thaddens in Trieglaff began entering into marriages with non-aristocratic individuals in 1855, but did not for that reason cease to think in terms of a stratified society. And families of commoners who acquired the traditional manorial estates did everything they could to preserve relics of the tradition and assume its manners of living. Within their circles, political liberalism made no gains at all.⁹

Here arises the unavoidable question why class order and feudal ways of life were able to persist so stubbornly, even though the processes of economic and technological modernization were making rapid progress. The transformation from class-defined "lord of a manor" to modern commercial agriculturalist was, after all, in full swing even in Pomerania in the nineteenth century. But advances in democracy did not, as adherents of the 1848 Revolution hoped, mend the gap that defeudalization tore open. There developed instead a nationalistic flood that in many respects overflowed its banks. The generation of the Wilhelminian Era held thinking on a national scale to be modern, and feudal thinking to be old-fashioned—though granted, also *schön*, nice.¹⁰

At the time, not even the "Trieglaffers" had yet grasped that, in the absence of reconciliation with the world of democracy, there was no escape from the dead end of nationalism. Critical thinking brought forth in the village metamorphosed rather more toward religious initiatives. Hence the ecumenical movement, with its international clubs and organizations, assumed an appeal for the younger generation of the Thaddens: it set the parameters within which they sought out new paths.¹¹

Consistent with this, the Trieglaff manor's resistance to the Nazi regime initially concentrated on the struggle with its church policy. The "Confessing Church" (Bekennende Kirche) was the field upon which con-

frontation with the nationalistic and racist German Christians (Deutsche Christen) took place. The hard path trodden by the family's eldest daughter, Elisabeth von Thadden, to Ravensbrück and a bitter end in Plötzensee, would similarly have been inconceivable absent the background of the *Kirchenkampf*, the established church's struggle against Nazism.¹²

The generational history of the Thaddens in Trieglaff and Vahnerow does not end with the Red Army's entrance in March of 1945. Quite the contrary, it continues there until December 1948, when local headquarters of the Soviet military in Trieglaff were withdrawn and the last German residents had to leave their homes. In these three and a half postwar years, old class-based relationships still cast their shadow on affairs as core members of the manorial proprietary families stayed behind, thereby exhibiting solidarity with families of workers on the land.

Upon conclusion of the Prussian-German phase of Trieglaff's history, many questions persisted. One had to do with relating to the new Trieglaffers—the Polish people who settled in the villages and tended the fields. Were there still lines of continuity, and if so, was it still possible to transmit experiences of the former German generations to the contemporary Polish ones?

But the questions do not confine themselves to the German-Polish relationship. They pertain as much to the discussion amongst Germans themselves about what the history of the region east of the Elbe River, including Pomerania—“East Elbian” history—means for them today. What influences can such a premodern world exert to keep bonds of human solidarity from dissipating even more swiftly in industrial societies, for example? Can life experiences from a time predating the rise of civil society shield against the narrow-mindedness of the middle-class way of life? And do memories of social ordering that antedate nation-states guard people against nationalistic paths of error?¹³ Those are questions for the next generation as it seeks the road toward a European Community that sees itself as more than an economic alliance.

The state of research into the history of Eastern Pomeranian localities, now Polish, is not very satisfactory. Polish historians must conduct their initial research in the history of the region using German sources. And their German colleagues in the discipline are more likely to specialize in the history of Western Pomerania, which remained German after 1945.¹⁴ Nevertheless a bilingual (German and Polish) inventory of the holdings of the Stettin state archives is now available, providing a view of archival materials that have been preserved.¹⁵ Beyond that, the few family archives still at hand must assist to fill gaps.

A productive source on the economic situation of the manorial properties and larger independent farm operations in Pomerania is the agricul-

tural directory of properties (*Landwirtschaftliches Güter-Adreßbuch*) dating from 1939.¹⁶ Not only are holdings in livestock and acreage set forth in it, but names of owners are given along with those of managerial heads or supervisors (the *Inspektoren*), who oversaw and directed estate operations (known as bailiffs on English estates). Only business results are absent from the tallies making up its contents.

According to these records, Trieglaff and both of the adjacent associated places, Vahnerow and Batzwitz, were among the numerous estate-centered settlements in the District of Greifenberg. Management of Trieglaff extended also to two outlying agricultural entities, Gruchow and Idashof. The estate had 2,834 acres (1,147 ha) of land, of which 2,078.2 acres were arable, 182.9 meadow, 180.4 pasture, 224.9 wooded, 81.5 lake-covered, and 210 non-arable. Holdings in livestock comprised 80 horses, 270 head of cattle, 180 swine, and 1,500 sheep. Alongside ten medium and smaller independent farmers, there was also one large farm on 61.8 acres (25 ha), of which 49.4 were arable, 7.4 meadow, 2.5 pasture, and 2.5 unfit for farming. He owned 2 horses, 15 cows, and 15 hogs.

In Vahnerow there were no independent farmers, only the estate property. It was listed as having 1067.5 acres (432 ha), of which 741.3 acres were arable, 84 meadow, 37.1 pasture, 185.3 wooded, and 19.8 unfit for farming. Livestock holdings encompassed 32 horses, 100 head of cattle, 180 hogs, and 170 sheep. Trieglaff, in comparison, was nearly three times as large.



Figure 2. Aerial view of the village of Trieglaff, 1934; foreground “Bauernende” (farmers’ end), background the estate

In Batzwitz, which for 18 years in the nineteenth century belonged to the Thaddens and then to the related family Senfft von Pilsach, the estate occupied 1114.45 acres (451 ha), of which 714.1 acres were arable, 64.3 meadow, 59.3 pasture, 237.2 wooded, and 42 non-arable. Making up holdings in livestock were 36 horses, 140 head of cattle, 200 hogs, and 450 sheep. Alongside the estate, eight independent farmers operated on a total of 729 acres (295 ha) of land, including 565.9 acres that were arable, 76.6 meadow, 45.7 pasture, 12.4 wooded, and 28.4 unfit for farming. They owned 27 horses, 152 head of cattle, and 140 swine in total.

In the matter of churches, too, the places were distinct from each other. In Trieglaff there were two churches from 1855 on, in Batzwitz one, and none at all in Vahnerow. As one of the oldest village churches in Pomerania, the medieval Trieglaff house of worship was the most impressive historically: St. Elisabeth's (*die Elisabethkirche*) was first mentioned in a document in 1297, one hundred years after Christianization of the land by Bishop Otto of Bamberg. The Batzwitz church was smaller and was not dedicated until some 150 years later, in 1440. Vahnerow belonged to the Batzwitz parish.¹⁷

That church affiliation occupied a place in people's memories here is attributable to a split that had a host of consequences for historical accounts. In 1847, large segments of the local communities, identified as Old Lutherans (*Altlutheraner*), separated from congregations of the established Church of the Prussian Union. This left traces in the generational history of the von Thadden family, but its effects carried as far as the United States. The families of émigrés from Trieglaff cultivated and are still cultivating their Old Lutheran traditions, even to the present day.

Notes

1. For comparison see Ulrike Jureit, *Generationenforschung* (Göttingen, 2006), 7ff., 62f. In addition, two volumes have in the meantime appeared under the rubric *Göttinger Studien zur Generationsforschung*, edited, with somewhat differing emphases, by Bernd Weisbrod: vol. 1, *Generation als Erzählung* (Göttingen, 2009), and vol. 2, *Historische Beiträge zur Generationsforschung* (Göttingen, 2009).

2. Cf. Rudolf von Thadden, "Umstrittene Erinnerung," in *Der Streit um Erinnerung*, ed. Martin Sabrow (Leipzig, 2008), 119ff. Further, Jacque Le Goff, *Histoire et Mémoire* (Paris, 1988), 10: "La mémoire est la matière première de l'histoire" [Memory is the first material of history].

3. Cf. Rudolf von Thadden, "Die Geschichte der Kirchen und Konfessionen," in *Handbuch der Preußischen Geschichte*, ed. Wolfgang Neugebauer (Berlin, 2001), 3: 592ff., 626ff., 654ff.

4. Johannes Bugenhagen, *Pomerania*, reproduction and translation of 1517–1518 manuscript [Latin/German], ed. Norbert Buske (Schwerin, 2008), 156.

5. Cf. Albert Ulrich, *Chronik des Kreises Greifenberg in Hinterpommern* (Dithmarschen: private printing, 1990), 351ff. For a concise glossary of terms that, like *Bauer*, have to do with estates and estate life, see Royal Natzke, ed., *The Nobleman Among the Brothers* (Bloomington, IN, 2006), 71, trans. Alma Ihlenfeldt. [In German, Wolfgang Marzahn, *Der Edelmann unter den Brüdern* (Lahr-Dinglingen), 1978.]

6. Cf. Rudolf von Thadden, *Prussia: The History of a Lost State*, trans. Angi Rutter (Cambridge, 1987), 57ff.

7. Cf. Patrick Wagner, *Bauern, Junker und Beamte* (Göttingen, 2005), 592.

8. Regarding the problem of the middle class in the nineteenth century cf. Jürgen Kocka, ed., *Verbürgerlichung, Recht und Politik* (Göttingen, 1995), 3: 7f.

9. Cf. Monika Wienfort, *Patrimonialgerichte in Preußen* (Göttingen, 2001), 22.

10. Wolfgang J. Mommsen, *Bürgerstolz und Weltmachtstreben* (Berlin, 1995), 7/2: 198ff.

11. Reinold von Thadden, *Auf verlorenem Posten? [A lost cause?]* (Tübingen, 1948), 63ff.

12. Cf. Jörg Thierfelder, "Von der Kooperation zur inneren Distanzierung," in *Elisabeth von Thadden*, ed. Matthias Riemenschneider and Jörg Thierfelder (Karlsruhe, 2002), 107f.

13. On the subject of nationalism cf. Norbert Elias, *Studien über die Deutschen. Machtkämpfe und Habitusentwicklung im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*, ed. Michael Schröter (Frankfurt am Main, 1989), 193ff.

14. This is shown by a look through *Baltische Studien, Pommersche Jahrbücher für Landesgeschichte* 76 (1990) to 96 (2010).

15. State archives of Stettin (Staatsarchiv Stettin), directory of holdings up to 1945, prepared by Radoslaw Gazinski et al. (Munich, 2004), Rep. 66, Greifenberg.

16. *Niekammers Landwirtschaftliche Güter-Adreßbücher*, vol. 1, *Pommern* (Leipzig, 1939), 192. (Cited areal measurements have been converted to units familiar to Americans. One hectare is 2.471 acres, and one acre 0.405 hectares, so 40 acres equals approximately 16 hectares. Discrepancies between some of the totals given and totaled itemized entries are present in the source figures.)

17. Cf. Ulrich, *Chronik*, 403f., 383f.